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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WERNER/SINGH

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [JO](#) [LE](#) [MAS](#) [PTER](#) [SA](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: MGLE01: CT COORDINATOR CRUMPTON AND ISF DIRECTOR
DISCUSS SECURITY ASSISTANCE

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

1. (S) In a May 23 meeting, Internal Security Forces (ISF) Director General Ashraf Rifi told Counterterrorism Coordinator Crumpton, the Ambassador, and emboffs that the ISF was rapidly expanding both its size and mission. From a personnel level of 13,000 last year, Rifi plans to increase the ISF to 28,000. With 19,000 personnel now, he expects to complete this expansion in four to five years. The ISF is also getting involved in counterterrorism, a role it did not previously perform. USG assistance can help with both trends, especially the need for intermediate to advanced training, said Rifi. The ISF has increased its cooperation with the other security agencies, including military intelligence. Rifi acknowledged some challenges such as a lack of a coordinating body for the security services, the perception among many Christians that the ISF is dominated by Sunni Muslims, and delays caused by politics. He asked for further training, and equipment assistance from the USG and its allies. End summary.

RIFI REVIEWS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ISF

2. (S) On May 23, Counterterrorism Coordinator Henry Crumpton, the Ambassador, D/RSO, and econoff met with Internal Security Forces (ISF) Director General Maj. Gen. Ashraf Rifi and his staff at ISF headquarters. Crumpton opened the meeting by thanking Rifi for the ongoing cooperation between the USG and ISF. Rifi thanked Crumpton for USG support for Lebanon and the ISF. Rifi then listed the internal security threats facing Lebanon, naming the regional Arab-Israeli conflict, radicalism and terrorism, and crime as the top three threats. The terrorist threat, in particular, is on the rise, said Rifi. The ISF had captured members of a cell linked to Al Qaida, and a suspect who was planning terrorist attacks in New York, recounted Rifi proudly. He further clarified that the threats facing Lebanon are often intertwined. For example, the Al Qaida cell was linked to Syrian intelligence, according to Rifi. Members of the cell had lived in Syria for two years where they were able to move about freely in their mission to recruit suicide bombers for Iraq.

3. (S) Rifi was upbeat about the future of the ISF. When he was appointed ISF Director General last year, the ISF counted some 13,000 personnel. Currently, the ISF numbers 19,000. According to ISF calculations, the ISF will need to raise its personnel level to 28,000 to secure a country of 4

million people. Rifi expected the ISF to reach 28,000 in four to five years, with delays due only to budgetary constraints. Rifi was also encouraged by increased cooperation between the ISF and other security agencies, especially the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) military intelligence. He explained that this closer coordination began following the massive March 14, 2005 rally in Beirut. Rapid expansion in the ranks of the ISF was made possible with LAF help. When the ISF ran out of training facilities, the LAF lent some of its bases for ISF basic training. The instructors were ISF, but used LAF facilities. Rifi reported that the ISF counterterrorism department holds routine meetings with LAF military intelligence and maintains regular communication with LAF intelligence. This year saw the first joint ISF-LAF operation, which resulted in the capture of those suspected of bombing an army barracks in Sidon. The various security agencies are now routinely exchanging both operational and analytic information with each other, according to Rifi.

RIFI ACKNOWLEDGES CHALLENGES
AND ASKS FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE

14. (S) In response to questions by Ambassador Crumpton and the Ambassador, Rifi acknowledged some of the challenges facing the ISF. First, there is no single GOL authority to coordinate the various intelligence and security agencies. The prime minister has a committee for this but is it more ceremonial than practical. Rifi said he supports a national intelligence council. Currently, the ISF reports to the Prime Minister, Interior Minister, and any other interested ministries. Second, Rifi expressed frustration with the perception among many Christians that the ISF was turning

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into an agency dominated by Sunnis. The rumor appears to have been started by pro-Syrian Lebanese after the ISF began its probe into the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. Rifi said he met with Maronite Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Sfeir on this issue and had increased the number of Christian officers in the ISF's intelligence unit. Rifi explained that it is difficult to recruit Christians at the entry-level rank of "policeman." Christians want to be sergeants or officers and are often unwilling to accept a lower rank. Third, Rifi acknowledged that security progress can and has been limited by political realities.

15. (S) Rifi, though confident that the ISF can guarantee Lebanon's security, said that continued and enhanced U.S. assistance was crucial to the success of ISF counterterrorism efforts. When asked by Crumpton for ISF needs, Rifi replied that the ISF maintains a long list of requirements. The USG can help in the form of moral support, specialized training, technical equipment, and officer exchanges. Counterterrorism is a new mission for the ISF, Rifi explained, so it needs help developing professionalism. Rifi asked that the USG provide more assistance as soon as possible to assist the rapid expansion of both the ISF's ranks and its mission.

16. (S) Rifi said the ISF list of requirements allows him to keep track of the assistance the ISF receives from its many donor countries, including the U.S., European Union, United Kingdom, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. When a need is met through international assistance, it is crossed off the list. Rifi noted that British security officials have held a seminar for the various security agencies. He was especially laudatory of Jordan, describing its support as excellent. Jordanian security officials have been training ISF personnel, and recently invited them to Jordan for further training. In addition, Saudi Arabia has finally come around and offered to assist Lebanese security services. Rifi agreed that one of his biggest needs was training, due to the ISF's surge in recruitment of new officers. He thanked Crumpton for USG support, explaining that the GOL knows that the USG is behind the increased support of other countries

for Lebanon.
FELTMAN